DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 137 700 CG 011 286

AUTHOR Pulvino, Charles J.
TITLE A Case Study Approach to Counselor Accountability.
PUB DATE [76]
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Workshop in Counseling and Guidance (6th, Madison, Wisconsin, 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Accountability; *Case Studies; Counseling Effectiveness; *Counselor Evaluation; *Counselor Role; *Evaluation Methods; Longitudinal Studies; Research; *Secondary School Counselors

ABSTRACT

School counselors are expected to perform numerous functions, provide many services and additionally be accountable for what they undertake. As a result of all the energy expended in providing services, there is an inadequacy in the counselor's own evaluation of what they do. This leads to lower quality service, innappropriate use of resources, insufficient appraisal of needs, ignorance about their personal impact on students and programs, and demands from their publics "to be accountable." The purpose of this paper is to present, through case materials, one approach to evaluation entitled, "The Individual Case Study." Data was drawn from materials collected on an individual that attended the Research and Guidance Laboratory during high school Grades 9-12; from followup studies done since high school graduation; and through a personal interview conducted some years later. (Author/YRJ)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED137700

A CASE STUDY APPROACH TO COUNSELOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Charles J. Pulvino
University of Wisconsin-Madison

School counselors are expected to perform numerous functions which involve many people, i.e., students, teachers, administrators, parents, educational specialists, and community representatives. In carrying out their professional responsibilities counselors are expected to perform many services and to be accountable for what they undertake (Pulvino and Sanborn, 1972).

Unfortunately many counselors expend so much energy in providing service that they inadequately evaluate what they do. The result of this inadequate evaluation frequently leads to lower quality service, inappropriate use of resources, insufficient appraisal of needs, ignorance about their personal impact on students and programs, and demands from their publics "to be accountable."

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to present, through case materials, one approach to evaluation not usually used by school counselors--The Individual Case Study. Materials used are "real." Data was drawn from materials collected on an individual that attended the Research and Guidance Laboratory[1] in the early 1960's. Materials were collected during the individual's participation in the Laboratory while she was in high school grades nine through twelve; from follow-up studies done since high school graduation; and through a personal interview conducted in January 1976.

A Case Study Approach

Background: Approximately twenty-six students that had graduated from high school and participated in the Research and Guidance Laboratory ten or more years ago were randomly identified to be subjects of longitudinal case studies. Of this total, thirteen case studies were undertaken

CG011286

---

[1] A description of the Research and Guidance Laboratory can be found in "Wisconsin's Research-Through-Service Program for Superior High School Students" by J. W. M. Rothney and M. P. Sanborn, Personnel and Guidance Journal, Vol. 44, No. 7, March 1966, 694-699.

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

which used as a conceptual guide the Wisconsin Career Education Planning Model (WCEPM) developed by Perrone and Lee (1976). One of these thirteen has been selected for this paper--the case of MARY.

Rationale: The purpose of undertaking this case study was to examine the educational/vocational perceptions, ideas and decisions of Mary and to determine, where possible, sources that acted as significant influences on Mary in her development.

The Case Study: Mary[2] (A Summary)

Mary's career development progressed in an unusually steady, straightforward manner, with few deviations from her early defined and desired goal. This development can be seen as a process of initially choosing a general occupational field, keying in on a number of specific areas within that field, and finally arriving at a single occupational choice. The Wisconsin Career Education Model is a useful tool with which to view this process, and the reader is urged to keep this in mind while reading the following chronological discussion of Mary's career development.

Mary was aware of the fact that she possessed above average intellectual talents while still quite young. Her mid-year promotion from fourth to fifth grade, her selection for accelerated high school courses, her selection for the _____ State High School science program, and her consistently high grades all served to underscore such thinking. Seen retrospectively, this awareness of intellectual abilities was important, for it formed a basic foundation and belief in self which in the years to come would serve two important functions: 1) a confidence that she could indeed undertake and succeed in a rigorous course of study culminating in her desired career choice, and 2) that her emerging competitive nature was backed up by considerable talents.

Concomitant to this awareness was a strong preference in school for mathematics and the sciences. Confidence in herself again appears to have played a role in this area; while Mary's grades were excellent in all areas of study, and while she was also an avid reader in fields not pertaining to mathematics and science, Mary notes that she felt "incompetent" in areas such as English. In addition, Mary was aware of the discrepancy between her various test scores in the quantitative and verbal areas, the latter being considerably lower. In light of her competitive nature, it is consistent and understandable that Mary's dominant areas of interest would be those in which she felt "more sure" of herself and "could compete with others."

---

2 The Case Study of Mary was prepared by William Hitch, Research Assistant in the Research and Guidance Laboratory.

This is not to say that Mary's interest in these areas was not founded on a sincere intellectual interest. Mary describes her early interest in mathematics and science with such words as "fascinating," "very thrilling," and "a challenge." Furthermore, the consistency of this interest over her academic career, the fact that, occupationally, the mathematics/science area was her long professed occupational choice, and the fact that she is currently secure and content in her occupational position and knows "it was the correct choice," all underscore the idea that Mary's early interest in mathematics and science was a sincere one. The fact that her abilities enabled her to be confident and competitive in these areas served to reinforce this interest.

A number of sources, including parents, family, 4-H club, and cultural background, played influential roles in the early stages of Mary's career development.

The recurrent theme that best characterizes the message of these sources is that by working hard and putting one's best effort forward, success in whatever pursuit chosen will necessarily follow. Mary reported that her parents served as models of hardworking efficiency, and that their example was extremely instrumental in the development of habits needed to excel academically and, ultimately, to achieve her desired career goal. In the same vein, 4-H club, with its emphasis on bettering one's personal achievements, and the Protestant Work Ethic of diligence and putting forth one's best efforts, were taken to heart by Mary and hence significant in the development of her overall approach toward the achievement of her occupational goal. Furthermore, competitiveness and the desire to excel appear to be a natural result of being raised in an environment that not only extrolled hard work and applauded optimal performance, but also (perhaps unknowingly) provided models for purposes of comparison: all siblings were honor roll students and went to college, a great-aunt received a Ph.D., a grandmother a B.S.

Mary's preference for mathematics and science was quickly translated into tentative occupational goals. As early as her sophomore year in high school, medical research was focused upon as a possible career choice. This choice continued to be foremost in her thinking throughout her high school years, although biophysics and teaching became possible alternatives. Mary reports that the Research and Guidance Laboratory played a significant role in helping her to focus on potential career choices. By defining certain interests that had previously been overlooked in her own mind, and by pinpointing certain things she had not seen in herself, the Laboratory helped to clarify her career thinking. Additional assistance in her orientation toward a career in science was gained from her participation in the _____ State University High School science program, where Mary came in contact with a biophysics professor. Mary notes that she thought at the time: "Wow! If I could be something like that!" The modeling purpose this professor served, and the degree

of his influence, especially when seen in retrospect, is obvious. Finally, the fact that Mary's parents were both science-oriented rather than inclined toward the arts and social studies no doubt exerted some influence on her tentative occupational choices.

It is significant and should be noted that Mary's orientation at this time toward a career in science fulfilled more than an academic interest on her part. A very strong trend toward humanitarianism had long been a prominent characteristic in Mary's personality, and human suffering was clearly seen as loathsome to her. A career in the health sciences, whether it be medical research, biophysics, or nursing (also a considered occupation during her high school years), would provide an outlet for the expression of her desire to better the lot of mankind. Hence, a career that coupled her deep interest in the sciences with the opportunity to fulfill her humanistic desires appeared to be appropriate for her. In view of this, Mary was quite precocius in her career thinking: not only did she correctly focus on the general field that exercised her primary academic interest while still at a young age, but, equally important she was also able to understand that such an area would enable her to fulfill prominent personality characteristics and needs.

In short, Mary graduated from high school with a strong idea of what career was best suited for her. No haphazard guessing was involved; on the contrary, it was a decision based not only on intellectual ability but also on keenness of interest, confidence in self to withstand the rigors of training, security in the knowledge that she could compete with others with similar goals, and awareness that a career in the health sciences would enable her to fulfill the humanistic motives so important to her. In addition, Mary was well equipped to embark on the next phase of her career development; she had taken an abundance of honors and college preparatory courses while in high school, had availed herself to all science courses offered at her school, had participated in science programs to increase the breadth of her knowledge, had developed excellent study habits which would prove to assist her in the years to come, and had, through the influence of significant others in her life, formed a will of grim determination that if she invested enough time and effort in the pursuit of her goals, these goals could be realized.

Yet Mary still had some exploration to do to specify what particular field of human research was best suited for her, and she wasted no time in trying to determine this area. Enrolled in the College of Letters and Science at the _____, she elected to engage in courses which offered a broad science background. In addition to such didactic training, Mary made a conscientious attempt to emphasize the experiential aspect of her education. This turned out to be a very important event in her career development process, for it caused her to dismiss from her thinking former areas of interest and encouraged her to investigate other areas. This modification process was extremely helpful in specifying a

particular area of human research in which to both major and, ultimately, develop a career. Time spent in a children's hospital caused Mary to re-evaluate her thinking toward medicine per se; seeing children die, especially those with whom she had become attached, was an aspect of medicine that she preferred not to deal with. Conversely, work experience in the food service area of a hospital, teaching disadvantaged youth health and nutrition, and, especially, work in the university agricultural library as a technician in nutritional research all served to emphasize the idea that perhaps nutritional research was the specific field for her. Experience in her course work apparently underscored this idea, for Mary gravitated toward the field of human nutrition and ultimately to major in nutritional science.

Aside from the didactic and experiential training, social awareness also played an influential role in Mary's ultimate choice of a major field of study. Mary felt "isolated" in the College of Letters and Science; that is, she disliked the fact that the formation of a close-knit group of friends whom she would see often was difficult. In addition, she deisred a sense of identity with her academic field and the people associated with it, something she found nearly impossible with such a general field as Letters and Science. To amend this, she transferred to the School of Home Economics and later to the School of Agriculture, where she majored in nutritional science. Here she found the sought-after sense of identity. Selection to "Crucible" and "Motorboard" reinforced this feeling.

Having chosen her specific area of interest in scientific research, Mary strove to make herself unique, academically. To accomplish this, she enrolled in a number of science courses from a variety of disciplines, while at the same time she placed an emphasis on research in her studies. This enabled her to concentrate on what she felt to be the prime areas of interest for her within nutritional science while equipping herself with the laboratory skills she would need later. Finally, by making herself unique within her field, she sharpened her competitive edge for the job market. It should be noted that Mary's desire for uniqueness parallels her desire to excel; that is, by being broadly trained within her discipline while still emphasizing one particular aspect of her education, she was able to bring a greater degree of expertise to her occupation, which in turn enabled her to excel.

While content with the field of nutritional science, Mary recognized certain limitations in her major but she was secure enough with her choice to admit and accept them. Specifically, she noted that laboratory work did not deal directly with people. This concerned her, since in her words, "science can be hard and cruel if you don't do anything other than mix test tubes." Nevertheless, her love for scientific research and her fascination with the nutritional aspects of health caused her to accept this limitation in her major.

Upon graduation from college with a B.S. in nutritional science, Mary debated whether to accept a job or enroll in graduate school. She was quite sure of herself that the career she had prepared for was the right one for her. This confidence was reflected in her approach to job interviews in which she told the _____ interviewer that she didn't know how they could expect a woman with her credentials to take the job they offered. In Mary's words, "I think I was fairly sure about myself. I'm usually not that cocky." She decided to accept the position of biochemist with _____ with the understanding that, after two years on the job, she might return to school. However, Mary has since married, and, since the company pays for courses she may desire to take, she has decided to stay with her job.

The position with _____ is the only job Mary has had since graduation, and she enjoys it immensely, viewing it "very probably" as a lifelong career. She is given a great deal of responsibility, and the position is oriented to laboratory research. To quote Mary, "I really love the work, it's fantastic...I feel like I'm using my brain." Promotions came rapidly, and Mary now enjoys the position of senior biochemist.

Mary has understandable mixed feelings about some of her colleagues, but accepts this as a fact of life. In addition, she sometimes wishes the job "was more people oriented." But her contentment with her career is perhaps best summed up in the following statement: "I'm satisfied with the challenge that research and development presents. It's been a continuing learning experience since I accepted the job."

In conclusion, it is perhaps a tribute to Mary that she was perceptive enough at an early age to have a relatively clear idea of what she desired in a career, possessed the resources--both personal and otherwise--to put that idea into action, and the determination and talent to make that idea a reality. Also, it is interesting to note how her career development followed the Wisconsin Career Education Model. Mary remarked that she had no idea whatever that she was using the principles of the model in her progression toward, and engagement in, her occupational choice. Yet the model fits perfectly her process of career decision making.

Cautions: A case study, such as the Case of Mary, can be used to reveal a great deal about one student, a select group of students, or about the impact of a school or program on students in general. However, for results to be meaningful care must be taken to work from a conceptual framework--such as the WCEPM--which will provide a consistent reference point from which to make observations. Also, the purpose for doing the case study must be clearly detailed in advance, including all procedures which will be employed. Finally, counselors interested in using the

case study approach should be well versed in the advantages and difficulties inherent in this methodology. An excellent source for learning about both is Rothney's (1968) text Methods of Studying the Individual Child: The Psychological Case Study.

A closer look: Careful examination of a number of case studies provide the counselor with a number of important leads for program improvement and development. If done on a regular basis case studies can reveal areas of the counseling program that are particularly effective and provide "hard" data for addressing concerns of critics.

To exemplify these points, consider The Case of Mary.

1. Self-awareness of intellectual abilities provided a strong motivational foundation for Mary.

2. Confidence that she could exceed allowed Mary to try many new activities.

3. Mary's competitiveness developed as a result of awareness and confidence.

4. The influence of important others taught Mary to believe that hard work led to success.

5. Orientation experiences played a significant role in helping Mary focus on a career choice.

6. Modeling of significant others was important in Mary's career choice.

7. Work experiences provided needed inputs for helping Mary refine her decision making skills.

What Can Be Learned?

A careful examination of Mary's case reveals at least one instance in which counselors influenced her vocational development. Mary reported that the Research and Guidance Laboratory (staff counselors) played a significant role in helping her to focus on potential career choices. By defining certain interests that had previously been overlooked in her own mind, and by pinpointing certain things she had seen in herself, the Laboratory (staff counselors) helped to clarify her thinking.

Although input on counseling effectiveness was gained this particular case study was not designed to determine counselor influence. If it had

been additional questions could have been asked during the interview and cumulative data could have been analyzed with this goal in mind. Counselors interested in use of case studies for this purpose are advised to keep this in mind.

In addition to learning about counselor influence Mary's case reveals factors important in the development of wise career decision making. For Mary, self-awareness, confidence, development of a competitive spirit, orientation experiences, social support from significant others, modeling of teachers, work experiences, the chance to choose from an advanced high school curriculum, and the counsel to help integrate experiences and thoughts all were significant in her development.

If these variables were important for Mary--Is it reasonable to assume that some would be important for other students? I believe it is. In any case, the information learned from one student can be of benefit to other students and can provide the basis for development of systematic counseling programs.

Conclusion

To be accountable counselors must know what they want to do, why they want to do it, and how they hope to accomplish their goals. In addition, counselors must have some idea of how to measure counseling outcomes. Case studies are useful in the measuring phase because they examine the total educational impact on individual students and point to specific areas of personal importance frequently lost in general educational evaluations. In the Case of Mary a number of issues were revealed which were particularly valuable for her educational development. A series of case studies with other students would reveal common issues important to individuals at any age or grade level. Assessment of these issues or trends could help counselors learn a great deal about their effectiveness and provide ideas for general program development. Additionally, individual assessment of a case study provides the basis for on-going individual counseling. In both cases, students are benefactors, and counselors, by building their service on the needs of students, are accountable.

References

Hitch, W. Mary: A Case Study. Non-published case study done in the Research and Guidance Laboratory, Madison, Wisconsin, January 1976.

Perrone, P. A., & Lee, J. L. Wisconsin Career Education Planning Model, in progress, June 1976.

Pulvino, C. J., & Sanborn, M. P. Feedback and Accountability. Personnel and Guidance Journal, Vol. 51, No. 1, September 1972, 15-20.

Rothney, J. W. M. Methods of Studying the Individual Child: The Psychological Case Study. Xerox Publishing Co., Lexington, Mass., 1968.

Rothney, J. W. M., & Sanborn, M. P. Wisconsin's Research-Through-Service Program for Superior High School Students. Personnel and Guidance Journal, Vol. 44, No. 7, March 1966, 694-699.

END

DEPT. OF HEW

NAT'L INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

ERIC

DATE FILMED

AUG 31 1977